

High School Exit Examination Panel Meeting
The Sacramento Convention Center, Room 308
April 18, 2000

Panelists present included: Sarah “Betsy” Adams, Nancy Avoy, Kathleen Blackwood, Angela Boyle, Kimberlee Breen, James Brown, Dan Condrón, Margaret DeArmond, Ana Maria Flores, James Frost, Ana Maria Golan, Dave Jolly, Ruth Ann McKenna, Ella Miyamoto, Becky Reece, Marilyn K. Wulliger

Panelists not present included: Christine Aranda, Sally Baker, Leon Beauchman, Mary Bergan, Marilyn Buchi, Bill Cirone, Diego Davalos, Bob Douglas, Fernando Elizondo, Ted Erskin, Ben Flores, Jerry Flores, Hal Geiogoue, Dave Gordon, Alice Kawazoe, David Marsh, Bobbie Metzger, Anthony Moye, Sharif Shakrani, Glen Thomas, Curtis Washington, Marilyn Whirry, Jim Wilson, Mark Wilson

Special Education Liaison present: Kendra Rose

State Board of Education Liaisons not present: Marion Joseph, Monica Lozano

California Department of Education (CDE) staff present included: Robert Anderson, John Carey, Jan Chladek, Gayland Jordan, Linda Lownes, Paul Michaelson, Marion Miller, Gwen Stephens

American Institutes for Research (AIR) staff present included: Paul Williams

Human Resources Research (HumRRO) staff present included: Pat Ford

Jim Brown, co-chair, welcomed the panel members and opened the meeting. He commented on finalizing the first field test and said that now the panel needed to think about implementation issues for the High School Exit Examination (HSEE) including legal issues, opportunity to learn, alternative schools, and strategies for special education and bilingual education. He also said that he had presented information on the HSEE for the high schools in his district and that their reactions and comments were interesting.

Gwen Stephens, director of the Standards and Assessment Division, talked about the items in the panel’s packets. She advised members to review the materials from the Fair Political Practices Commission in case they are asked to speak about the examination. She then introduced Art Coleman, attorney from Nixon and Peabody, adjunct professor of law and Counsel with the Department of Governmental Relations, Washington, DC. She also introduced Paul Tractenburg, professor of law at Rutgers University School of Law, New Jersey. Ms. Stephens said she had invited the attorneys to attend the panel meeting and they would be advising the Department about potential HSEE legal issues.

Ms. Stephens then introduced Patrick Ford, the Project Liaison and Logistics Coordinator, from the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). Mr. Ford talked about the independent evaluation HumRRO is doing on the development and implementation of the HSEE.

He said that the purpose of the independent evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the quality of the examination, its legal defensibility, and the intended and unintended consequences of its use as a requirement for high school graduation. Validity issues include accurate measurement of mastery of knowledge and skills specified in the state standards, freedom from cultural bias or other irrelevant sources of variance, and sufficiently accurate scores. Legal defensibility issues include adequate opportunity to learn the material covered by the exam and adequate opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through such means as re-testing and appropriate accommodations. Consequence issues include changes in graduation rates, routes to graduation, and/or college attendance; improvements in instruction both prior to high school and for students who initially fail; student motivation; and parental involvement.

HumRRO is collecting information from a review of other states' high school exit examination policies, advice from testing and curriculum consultants, review of plans for test development, independent review of test items, statistical analyses of field test data, teacher/administrator survey on intended practices, and baseline data on graduation and college attendance rates. The first evaluation report is due in July 2000, the second in February 2002, and the third and final in February 2004.

For their independent review of test items, HumRRO will be conducting two workshops with teachers from 24 districts in California (a representative sample of geographic area and instructional conditions) to look at the correspondence between the items and the standards and to give HumRRO information on what is happening now in districts with regard to the standards. They will work with 75 schools from these districts throughout the evaluation, doing surveys of faculty and administration on current practices, and working with baseline data on attendance and graduation rates. The 75 schools include alternative and continuation schools.

Mr. Ford informed the panel that the Principal Investigator, Lauress Wise, will attend the May panel meeting and intends to spend some time gathering information from panel members.

Gwen Stephens provided an update on CDE activities. She announced that the final *District and School Information Packet* the panel had reviewed in March was in their April HSEE packet and that the recommended standards for the test are being put on the Internet with a note stating the content of the final test will be determined by the two field tests. She added that the State Board of Education has the authority to adopt the final test. The panel's recommendations are advisory to the Superintendent and the Superintendent's recommendations are advisory to the Board. CDE wants districts and

schools to have enough direction for the test as they are planning it but to know that it may change in the future.

Ms. Stephens announced that the CDE will begin conducting focus groups on the HSEE beginning on May 4. She also announced *School's In*, CDE's annual conference, on August 8-10, and said that the Standards and Assessment Division would like to have a presentation on the HSEE involving panel members. She passed out *School's In* brochures and encouraged people to attend, noting that CDE would reimburse panel members who wanted to go.

Paul Williams, representing the American Institutes for Research (AIR) was asked to provide an update on their activities in preparing for the spring field test. He said that all items have been completed in terms of revisions. AIR is now turning its attention to item development for the fall field test. In response to a question, he said that the multiple-choice portions for the mathematics and English-language arts tests will each be about 2 hours and 20 minutes. The English-language arts constructed response will be about 1 hour and 30 minutes. The current instructions for the test suggest the accommodations that are made for students according to their IEPs should be used for the field test.

Ms. Stephens introduced Victoria Young, the Director of Instructional Coordination and the state writing assessment at the Texas Education Agency.

Ms. Young said the panel's discussions are reminiscent of the many discussions they have had in Texas. She said Texas moved to a more rigorous state curriculum in 1997, the Texas essential knowledge and skills. Ms. Young has been involved in developing a new assessment program, mandated to begin in spring 2001, which will be linked to the new state curriculum. The new high school exit exam increases both the rigor and the breadth of the current one, adding science and social studies. The current minimum high school plan for students mandates algebra I. The new law mandates the assessment to include algebra I and geometry, with the aid of technology, e.g., calculators; English 3; and integrated physics, chemistry, and biology. The Texas Legislature is moving the exit test to 11th grade so it will be closer to graduation and more of a true exit test. The implications include fewer chances to pass the exam; less time for preparation, especially for high school students new to Texas education; and less time for identifying school and district need. The Legislature also asked that the new exit test indicate whether or not students are ready to enroll in an institution of higher learning.

The Texas Education Agency is sending out a survey of draft objectives and student expectations for this new assessment. It will be going to every high school campus in Texas. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) reflect the language of the statewide curriculum. The agency is asking educators to comment on the draft TEKS: 1) is this essential to measure, 2) is it essential to measure but not in its entirety, 3) is it not essential to measure on a statewide test? They will also have these expectations on the Internet. Texas will additionally go out to the public for a wide review of prototype items. Ms. Young said that schools have to have a voice on how the curriculum is assessed.

Texas has been moving the assessment program from a punitive, secret program to an open public program linked closely to curriculum. Ms. Young said that it is critical to translate the assessment back into classroom terms districts, teachers, students, and parents can understand. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment need to be a seamless K-12 program. High school and elementary curriculum are state mandated, and there are K-12 adoptions for each subject area. In preparing the curriculum, teachers look at the assessment backwards—where do kids need to be at grade 11-- and use that information to build the program back to third grade. Texas allows students to take past exit tests on the computer and get immediate feedback. All tests are released to the public after they are given. Study guides are given out to every student who has failed any part of the test.

The Texas statewide assessment program is for grades 3-11. There is an English version, a Spanish version through grade 6, and an alternative assessment for special education students. Texas has a reading proficiency test in English from grades 3 to 12 for students whose language is other than English. The purpose of the test is to help teachers make decisions about when students are ready for testing in English. The test measures whether students are making progress in English acquisition. Texas does not have an exemption for students with limited English speaking abilities.

The alternative assessment for special education students tracks the progress of students for whom the regular assessment is inappropriate. It is currently for grades 3-8 with the intention of moving it into high school. The assessment helps teachers know when the student is ready to move into a regular education program. Texas does allow accommodations, e.g., it allows the mathematics test to be read to a student but does not allow the reading test to be read to a student because it is then not a test of reading. The alternative assessment is not for students who are receiving life skills but for students who are receiving the regular academic program and are not at grade level.

To help schools and teachers with curriculum and assessment, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has implemented grade-level academies for teachers. This begins with kindergarten and adds a grade each year. The TEA has published guides to Texas-based assessment including sample items and has contracted with professional development centers to develop teaching guides for subject areas for improving instruction. Schools receive a package including released tests, scoring guides, guides to interpreting assessment reports, study guides, and curriculum guides. Schools are asked to use all of this information to help them improve their programs. Schools are encouraged to show parents the released tests, show them the items, and talk with them about it.

Ms. Stephens introduced Rebecca Kopriva, a consultant and psychometrician from Washington, DC. Ms. Kopriva said that the issue with exit examinations is to make sure the test given to all students is accurate for all populations of students. The issue is not who to include, because everyone will be included, but how to test them. The core of building accurate and accessible tests is to measure the same constructs for all students.

It is important to have clear and explicit definitions of what is being measured. Constructs should be written at a consistent level of detail that provides specificity and has latitude for the ways different students access tests and demonstrate what they know. Two questions guide test development: 1) What is being measured if the test is accommodated? 2) And what is being measured if the test stays the same?

Ms. Kopriva said that there are confounding issues of literature and literacy understanding with basic literacy and reading comprehension as the California standards progress by grade level. She said that it is important to define our standards.

She suggested that the current validity data for the exit examination should be disaggregated by group and that new validity data on accommodations in the examination is needed to ensure the same constructs are being measured. She also suggested California expand bias reviews to include participation of English language learners experts. Multiple-choice tests, she noted, are difficult for English language learners because the distractors and correct answers do not always make sense to them.

Ms. Kopriva said test results should be viewed tentatively and be triangulated with other measures to produce accurate decisions.

Jim Brown thanked Ms. Kopriva and asked the committee to take a five-minute break.

The panel discussed the kinds of information needed by schools and parents and agreed to have longer small-group sessions on these topics at the next meeting. Topics included resources needed for students to be successful, including practices that promote best student performance; opportunity to learn; accommodations; testing conditions; professional development for teachers; and communication to the schools and parents about the examination.

Two people addressed the panel at the opportunity for public comment.

The meeting was adjourned.

HSEE April 18 Follow-up

(Italicized material indicates the topic specified by the panel for further discussion or for follow-up action)

Questions answered at the meeting:

- Q: Are the panel members encouraged to use the High School Exit Examination District and School Information Packet?
A: Multiple copies are being sent to all district offices. SAD would like to put out a more detailed May packet that would provide notification and would include as much detail as is appropriate at that time. Parent Q & A's are being translated into Spanish. The law requires local districts to translate parent information.
- Comment: Pass/fail should be based on more than just the score on the test. Response: Setting the pass/fail will happen after the results of the field test.

Questions/Issues for further discussion:*

Accommodations

- At forthcoming meetings, continue the discussion on accommodations, not just for special ed and ELL students, but also for alternative and continuation schools, court schools, adult schools.
- Alternative assessments—Standards and Assessment Division has developed alternative assessments to the SAT 9 but not the HSEE. Regarding field testing of special needs students, the first field test does not oversample special needs students. AIR will have information on ELLs as well as students with special needs, but those data will not resolve all data-driven questions.

Testing Times/Space/Conditions

- *Will the language arts test be one day and the math test another? Could the English language arts be administered earlier in the year to allow time for hand scoring? If the math exam were held later it would allow time for more content to be learned.*
- *Problems raised by testing on a single day*
 - In LAUSD, the test cannot be on one day because at any one time, only 1/3 of the students will be present.
 - Concept 6 schools in Los Angeles finish their school year in April. Will the testing dates accommodate these students? Will there be year-round schools that also finish earlier?
 - Providing four testing opportunities will pose scheduling problems for schools. Schools cannot be shut down for twelve days four times a year. The state will need to go to ETS' SAT Saturday model for the four-times-a-year testing situations.
- Testing conditions—how you separate the kids who are supposed to take the test from who aren't. Untimed tests may wreak havoc because of accommodations. *Recommendations on testing conditions need to be nailed down. Need to address this question this summer.*
- Educational option and continuation schools are typically small schools that don't have one place where all students can be tested.

Resources for Parents, Teachers, Students

- *What kinds of information on student results would be most valuable to parents, teachers, and students?*

Alternatives to Passing GSE and Implications of Alternatives

- If a student does exceedingly well on the GSE, will he/she have to take the HSEE? Panel could make a legislative recommendation on this.
- If high-end students don't take the exit exam, and it continues to be part of the API—then what?

Other

- Guidelines or recommendations may need to be developed to define a sophomore. Question of who is a sophomore varies from district to district and will give different data results.

Items for discussion that require follow-up

Sample Notice of HSEE

- What should be included in sample notice to be sent out in May? Some information recommended for inclusion:
 - 1) First, set the date.
 - 2) Distribute a letter that says that the HSEE will be administered on this date—go to the website. In the notice, include requirements to pass.
 - 3) Distribute a press release—publicize it in as many ways as possible.
 - 4) Put out standards.
 - 5) Have a teleconference.
- Send the notice not just to special ed and ELL, but also to alternative and continuation schools, court schools, adult schools.

Resources for Parents, Teachers, Students

- Information on the following needs to be pulled together and presented to the legislature so that they can visualize the funding requirements: What system/resources do we need to help students succeed on this examination?
 - organization
 - the necessary communications materials, not just sample booklets
 - resources to release all items—would be very helpful to students
- Since a number of teachers in the state are still unaware of the standards or the exit exam, *workshops should be lined up to help teachers incorporate the standards into their curricula.*

School's In

- Panel members are invited and we would like them to be part of the HSEE presentation.

Alternative Assessments

- Law says we need to have alternative assessments available by July 1.

Questions Related to API

- Will professional development for teachers count against the school—because it is considered a staff absence regardless of reason—on next year's API?

Other

- Would like to see the Independent Evaluator Report provide information that would help educators and lawmakers make decisions on what current practices promote best student achievement. *Evaluator report should be on the agenda of every meeting.*
- Will panel have chance to see HumRRO draft materials for item review workshops, item rating workshops, access for items for review and draft survey instruments?
- *Urge/invite SBE members to attend an HSEE meeting before October and talk to us about the support system that will be available for this exam.*

***Note:** Next month we will have more small-group discussion on these topics.